

that of the librarian as the publisher of scholarly information for the sake of human development.

Poor access

Surveys have shown that sub-Saharan Africa has not made a significant contribution to the global body of scientific knowledge -- it has supplied only 0,7% of research findings, with a large percentage of that coming from South Africa. This is less than other developing areas such as India (1.9%) and China (2%). Part of the reason for the low profile of scientists in Africa is the poor access to scientific publications.

In 2003, following a workshop in Germany at which international experts concluded that the internet offers humanity an unprecedented opportunity of making knowledge universally accessible, the Berlin Declaration on Open Access to Knowledge in the Sciences and Humanities was adopted. It encourages authors and rights holders to grant all users a free, irrevocable and universal right of access to their contributions. They should allow their work to be used, reproduced or disseminated in digital form, with the only proviso being the correct attribution of authorship or copyright ownership.

On Wednesday last week Stellenbosch University signed the [declaration](#).

This is a demonstration of its commitment to sharing its research and other scholarly material with research communities, especially those on the African continent.

The declaration calls for the complete version of a work -- with the supplemental material and a declaration of the right of use -- to be made accessible in at least one electronic online archive. Stellenbosch has created SUNScholar, an electronic archive for the collection, preservation and distribution of digital theses, dissertations, research articles, inaugural addresses, conference proceedings and other material.

Built with open source software, SUNScholar can be accessed by [anyone](#) with an internet connection.

It is important for the university to share its knowledge with others. This aim is part of the university's recently launched Hope Project, which Stellenbosch vice-chancellor Russel Botman [described](#) in the *Mail & Guardian* earlier this year.

Open access has the potential to deliver critical information to change the lives of people. We invite others to come on board and support this movement.

Ellen Tise is the senior director of Stellenbosch University's Library and Information Service and president of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions

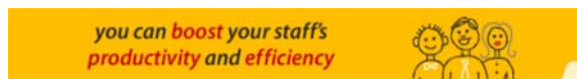
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COMMENTS

Finally! We are heading in the right direction:) This is a huge milestone for the continent. I expect the transaction cost of acquiring information to be reduced significantly. Shuttleworth for Ministry of Science and Technology. Forget Ms Pandor! The future is right here. now:)

Thobile Lindelwa Ntaka on October 29, 2010, 10:45 pm

Great idea. I'm looking forward to seeing all our universities follow suit.

Judy Backhouse on November 1, 2010, 8:26 am

Congratulations to Stellenbosch University. Great to see South African universities joining the fray in this very exciting global movement of sharing online content. The University of Cape Town has an exciting (and rapidly growing) list of open educational resources available at <http://opencontent.uct.ac.za/>.

Michelle Willmers on November 2, 2010, 11:49 am

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